

Message Text

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SUBJ: THE FRASER GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS U.S. DEFENSE
FACILITIES AND OTHER RELATED ISSUES

1. SUMMARY: THISCABLE OUTLINES PRIME MINISTER FRASER'S VIEWS ON
POLITICO-MILITARY RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, THE CURRENT
POLITICAL CLIMATE IN AUSTRALIA, AND THE EMBASSY'S RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR DEALING WITH OUTSTANDING POLITICO-MILITARY ISSUES. END SUMMARY.

2. PRIME MINISTER FRASER IS A DEEPLY CONSERVATIVE MAN WHO VALUES
AUSTRALIA'S DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES. HE HAS
PLEDGED TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES GENERALLY,
AND HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS U.S. DEFENSE FACILITIES IN AUSTRALIA AND
OTHER POLITICO-MILITARY ISSUES WILL BE MORE FORTHCOMING THAN
WHITLAM'S. THE FRASER APPROACH TO POLITICO-MILITARY PROBLEMS WILL
BE TO DEMONSTRATE THAT AUSTRALIA IS A WORTHY ALLY WITH WHOM
DEFENSE TIES SHOULD BE MAINTAINED FOR THE INDEFINITE FUTURE.

3. IT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND HOWEVER, THAT FRASER IS ASSUMING
POWER IN AN AUSTRALIA WHICH HAS CHANGED MARKEDLY FROM THE QTE ALL
THE WAY WITH LBJ DAYS. END QTE. THE VIETNAM WAR, A GROWING SENSE
OF NATIONALISM, AND 25 YEARS OF PEACE HAVE ALL COMBINED TO CREATE
AN ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH DEFENSE ALLIANCES AND THREATS OF WAR SEEM
TO THE AVERAGE AUSTRALIAN TO HAVE A SOMEWHAT UNREAL QUALITY ABOUT
THEM. MOREOVER, CLOSE IDENTIFICATION WITH THINGS AMERICAN HAS LOST
SOME OF ITS LUSTER IN RECENT YEARS. VIETNAM, THE WATERGATE
AFFAIR, THE KENNEDY AND KING MURDERS, STUDENT UNREST, RACIAL

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 CANBER 08624 310711Z

PROBLEMS, AND THE LOT HAVE BLURRED THE TRADITIONAL AND MORE

HOPEFUL VISION OF AMERICAN LIFE. WHILE THE NUMBER OF AUSTRALIANS OPPOSED TO ANZUS AND U.S. DEFENSE FACILITIES REMAINS SMALL THERE NOW IS THE POTENTIAL FOR SUBSTANTIAL PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ANTI-AMERICAN POLITICAL STANCES IN AUSTRALIA.

4. FRASER IS VERY MUCH AWARE THAT THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED AND WILL CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE GOA'S POSITION ON EACH POLITICO-MILITARY ISSUE SO AS NOT TO CREATE THE IMPRESSION THAT HIS GOVERNMENT IS GIVING THE USG TOO MUCH TOO FAST. FRASER'S MAIN OBJECTIVE WILL BE TO HEAD OFF POSSIBLE CRITICISM OF THE US-AUSTRALIAN DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP AND U.S. DEFENSE FACILITIES IN AUSTRALIA FROM THE LEFTWING OF THE ALP.

5. FRASER IS BY NATURE A CAUTIONS AND THOROUGH ADMINISTRATOR. HE WILL BE GUIDED INITIALLY MORE BY THE ADVICE HE RECEIVES FROM HIS TOP CIVIL SERVANTS THAN BY THE ADVICE HE RECEIVES FROM HIS NEW MINISTERS. FOR THESE REASONS OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEALING WITH THE GOA ON OUTSTANDING DEFENSE ISSUES TAKES INTO ACCOUNT OUR BEST ESTIMATE OF OFFICIAL GOA ATTITUDES ON EACH ISSUE. OUR RECOMMENDATIONS ON DEALING WITH SPECIFIC POLITICO-MILITARY ISSUES ARE OUTLINED BELOW.

6. NUCLEAR WARSHIP VISITS TO AUSTRALIAN PORTS - DFA AND THE DEPT. OF DEFENSE ARE WORKING UP A NEW SUBMISSION TO CABINET ON NUCLEAR WARSHIP VISITS TO AUSTRALIAN PORTS. THIS SUBMISSION IS DESIGNED TO SPEED UP CABINET APPROVAL OF NPW VISITS. THE FRASER GOVERNMENT WILL BE MOVING QUICKLY ON NPW VISITS AND THE PROFESSIONALS IN THE AUSTRALIAN DFA AND DOD APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE WHICH WE ATTACH TO SUCH VISITS.

EMBASSY RECOMMENDATION: THAT THE USG NOT PRESS THE GOA FURTHER ON NPW VISITS FOR THE TIME BEING.

7. SOON - THE FRASER GOVERNMENT LIKE THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT WILL NOT WANT THIS FACILITY LOCATED NEAR NORTHWEST CAPE AND WILL ASK THAT IT BE MANNED BY CIVILIANS RATHER THAN BY USAF PERSONNEL. DFA AND DOD ARE AWARE THAT THE USG IS INTERESTED IN MOVING AHEAD WITH THIS PROJECT IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND DFA HAS PROMISED A FORMAL RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST TO ESTABLISH THIS FACILITY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA EARLY IN JANUARY. EMBASSY RECOMMENDATION: THAT THE USG
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 CANBER 08624 310711Z

CONSIDER SITING THE STATION AT A LOCATION OTHER THAN NORTHWEST CAPE AND MANNING IT WITH CIVILIAN PERSONNEL.

8. SEISMIC STATION AT ALICE SPRINGS, DET. 421 - THE GOA IS ANXIOUS TO COMPLETE ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRANSFERRING THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF THIS STATION FROM THE USAF TO THE AUSTRALIAN DEPT. OF SCIENCE. IT IS TOO LATE NOW FOR US TO ATTEMPT TO REVERSE THIS POSITION. IF WE WERE ABLE TO CONVINCE THE FRASER GOVERNMENT TO

AGREE TO ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD IMMEDIATELY DRAW FIRE FROM THE ALP FOR REVERSING A POSITION WHICH THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT AND THE USG HAD PREVIOUSLY AGREED TO. IN ANY EVENT WE BELIEVE THAT THE FRASER GOVERNMENT WILL FOLLOW DFA'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND INSIST THAT THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF THE STATION BE TAKEN OVER BY THE GOA. WE ANTICIPATE NO DIFFICULTY IN ARRANGING ANOTHER SIX MONTH EXTENSION OF THE EXISTING AGREEMENT WHILE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TRANSFER OF THE FACILITY ARE COMPLETED AND GOA EMPLOYEES AND GOA CONTRACT PERSONNEL ARE TRAINED TO OPERATE IT. EMBASSY RECOMMENDATION: THAT WE MOVE AHEAD WITH NEGOTIATIONS TO COMPLETE THE TRANSFER OF THE STATION TO THE GOA WHILE SECURING AN ADDITIONAL SIX MONTH EXTENSION OF THE EXISTING AGREEMENT TO GIVE US TIME TO COMPLETE THE TRANSFER AND TRAIN AUSTRALIAN PERSONNEL.

9. OMEGA - DFA BELIEVES THAT THE FRASER GOVERNMENT WILL APPROVE THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN OMEGA STATION IN THE NEAR FUTURE. GIVEN THE FACT THAT RESPONSIBLE ALP POLITICIANS SUPPORT THE CONSTRUCTION OF OMEGA HERE, DFA ANTICIPATES LITTLE POLITICAL FLAK WHEN THE GOA APPROVES THIS PROGRAM. EMBASSY RECOMMENDATION: THAT THE USG SIT TIGHT. WE SHOULD HAVE GOOD NEWS SOON.

10. COMMENT: THE ABOVE RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERN FACILITIES AND ISSUES WHICH ALTHOUGH IMPORTANT TO THE U.S. ARE NOT OF AS GREAT NATIONAL INTEREST TO US AS PINE GAP, WOOMERA, AND NORTHWEST CAPE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE POSITIONS RECOMMENDED IN DEALING WITH THESE SUBJECTS WILL MAKE IT LESS LIKELY THAT THE RETENTION OF THE THREE MAJOR FACILITIES HERE WILL BECOME A CONTENTIOUS POLITICAL ISSUE IN THE FUTURE. WE HAVE IN THE FRASER GOVERNMENT A CONSERVATIVE GROUP WHICH APPRECIATES THE IMPORTANCE OF AUSTRALIA'S DEFENSE TIES TO THE UNITED STATES AND WHICH IS PREPARED TO WORK WITH US TO SEE THAT THESE TIES AND THE FACILITIES IN AUSTRALIA WHICH REINFORCE THEM WILL BE MAINTAINED FOR THE INDEFINITE FUTURE.

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SECRET

PAGE 04 CANBER 08624 310711Z

WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE TOO FAR AHEAD WE BELIEVE THAT A WILLINGNESS ON THE USG'S PART TO GIVE WAY ON ISSUES OF LESSER IMPORTANCE NOW WILL HELP TO MAINTAIN A POLITICAL CLIMATE HERE WHICH COULD HELP TO INSURE THAT OUR MAJOR FACILITIES IN AUSTRALIA CAN BE RETAINED FOR AT LEAST SEVERAL YEARS. END COMMENT.
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